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P. J. Bishop
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Atty. Docket No. STE01 P-798B

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

Art Unit : 2735
Examiner : B. Zimmerman
Appellants : Joel D. Stanfield et al.
Appln. No. : 08/998,302
Filed : December 24, 1997
Confirmation No. : 2417
For : ELECTRONIC SYSTEM, COMPONENTS AND METHOD
FOR TRACKING FILES

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Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington D.C. 20231

SUPPLEMENTAL APPELLANTS' BRIEF (37 CFR §1.192)

This brief is in furtherance of the Notice of Appeal filed in this case on December 10, 2001 and the Request for Reinstatement of Appeal filed concurrently herewith.

The fees required under §1.17(f), and any required petition for extension of time for filing this brief and fees therefor were previously paid in connection with the filing of a prior Appeal Briefs on November 20, 2000 and on March 11, 2002. The present Supplemental Appellants' Brief has been filed to reinstate the prior appeal. Accordingly, no additional fee is required. If a fee is somehow now required, Appellants ask that the fee be charged to Deposit Account No. 16 2463.

Rather than merely supplementing the prior briefs with arguments addressing the new rejections, Appellants have simply physically incorporated the prior brief in its entirety into this Supplemental Appellants' Brief.

This brief is transmitted in triplicate. (37 CFR §1.192(a)).

This brief contains these items under the following headings, and in the order set forth below (37 CFR §1.192(c)):

- I. Real Party in Interest
- II. Related Appeals and Interferences
- III. Status of Claims

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B. The References

1. U.S. Patent No. 5,455,409 Issued to Smith et al.
2. U.S. Patent No. 4,376,936 Issued to Kott
3. U.S. Patent No. 5,063,380 Issued to Wakura

C. Legal Considerations

1. Claims 1-18
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IX. Conclusion

Appendix of Claims Involved in the Appeal

The final page of this Brief bears the attorney's signature.

I. Real Party in Interest

The real party in interest in this application is Steelcase Development Inc., the assignment to which was recorded at Reel 010161, Frame 0874 on August 10, 1999. Steelcase Development Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of Steelcase Inc.

II. Related Appeals and Interferences

Appellants are aware of no appeals or interferences that would directly affect or be directly affected by, or have a bearing on, the Board's decision in the pending appeal.

III. Status of Claims

This is an appeal from a rejection of claims 1-63 of the above-identified application. Of claims 1-63, all but claims 59-63 have been twice rejected and were subject to a final rejection mailed September 10, 2001. In response to the filing of an Appeal Brief on March 11, 2002, in which Appellants again pointed out that claims 59-63 were not rejected, the Examiner withdrew finality and issued a non-final office action mailed May 22, 2002 in which claims 1-58 were rejected for the same reasons as in the prior final office action, and claims 59-63 were then rejected. Claims 1-63 were originally presented. Claims 1-63, as last amended, are attached in the Appendix hereto.

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IV. Status of Amendments

All Amendments filed in this application have been entered.

V. Summary of the Invention

The present invention relates to an electronic system for tracking/locating file folders in an office environment. The system of the present invention would, for example, automatically track and locate patent application file folders in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office without requiring any employee to take any positive manual action such as scanning a barcode each time a file is relocated. Provided employees place the file folders in a file cabinet, shelves, or on a particular stack on the employee's desk, the inventive system will automatically determine and update the location of the file folder thereby allowing another employee to readily locate the file folder at their own workstation or a designated workstation.

Not only can the inventive system identify, for example, a particular room or department in which the file is located, but the system may also identify the particular location of the file in the room or department.

An advantage the present system offers over all prior systems is that it may be used to track files that are contained in various types of folder retainers, such as file cabinets, file trays, shelving units, desk tops, and/or desk pads on or in which file folders are typically located in an office environment.

According to one aspect of the invention, as set out in independent claim 1, described in page 8, line 20 through page 9, line 18 and page 12, lines 5-17 of the specification and shown in Figs. 1 and 3, the invention is directed to a file tracking system (10) comprising: a database (shown and described as being embodied in processor/PC 20) for maintaining file location and unique file addresses for a plurality of files; a processor (20) for interfacing with the database and issuing control signals; a bus (30) connected to the processor; a folder retainer (40, 50, 60, 85) connected to the processor by the bus; and a plurality of file folders (70) each including an addressable device (76, 76a, 76b, Fig. 3) adapted to be electrically connected to the bus when the file folder is placed in the folder retainer. Each addressable device is responsive to a control signal including the unique address associated with the addressable device to transmit a signal back to the processor so that the processor may

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maintain the file location of each file in the database. As recited in claim 11 and shown in Figs. 5 and 6 and described on page 17, lines 4-7, each of the file folders includes a surface, a first conductor (73a, 73b) on the surface for providing control signals to the addressable device when the file folder is placed in the folder retainer, and a second conductor (72a, 72b) on the surface for providing a ground to the addressable device. As described on page 15, line 18 through page 16, line 11, the folder retainer may include at least one surface, a first conductive rail (83a-83c) positioned on the surface for providing power and control signals to the addressable devices positioned on the plurality of file folders when the file folders are placed in the folder retainer, and a second conductive rail (82a-82c) positioned on the surface for providing a ground to the addressable devices when the plurality of file folders are placed in the folder retainer (claim 12). At least one of the conductive rails may be integrated into a suspension rail of a file drawer (54) upon which hanging file folders may be suspended (see page 16, lines 11-16).

The features, advantages, and flexibility of the system of the present invention are made possible through various combinations of the system elements described in this application. For example, by providing a hierarchy of addressable devices, the file folders may be placed in a plurality of different folder retainers at different locations within the system and the system will automatically determine their location without requiring any additional activity on the part of the user. More specifically, the bus that interconnects all of the folder retainers in the system to the processor may be segmented with addressable devices having unique addresses associated with each segment of the bus. Additionally, addressable devices having their own unique address may be associated with each file cabinet, file drawer, bookcase, shelf, desk, and file folder. This hierarchy enables the processor to separately activate specific segments of the bus and specific folder retainers one at a time or in groups to determine the location of a file folder that responds to the transmittal of its unique address through the activated bus segments and folder retainer by transmitting a reply signal back to the processor.

The ability of the system to perform this function results from the ability of the system to conduct two-way communication with each addressable device provided on each file folder. A key part of this two-way communication is the fact that each addressable device on the file

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folders is responsive to a control signal that includes the unique address of that file folder. This allows the system to locate a file randomly placed within a folder retainer, such as a file cabinet, by the use of a common communication path to all the file folders within a folder retainer without requiring the use of any dedicated lines separately connected to each addressable device. The common communication path along with a power supply may be implemented using a two- or three-wire bus. If it were necessary to run dedicated lines to each file folder, the system would not be practical in any office having any appreciable number of file folders to track.

The above features are further enhanced by the periodic polling by the processor of each file folder within the system and by the subsequent comparison of received information to the information contained within the database. Thus, by polling the file folders and comparing the information received with the information in the database, the processor may determine when a file has been removed and make the appropriate notation and time stamp in the database so that the activity log and historical information for that file will show when the file was removed or added back into the system at another location. As explained in the specification, this polling is affected by the processor separately activating different segments of the bus and transmitting the unique address of each file folder previously associated with that segment to see if a response is received. The specifics of how these features and elements are recited in the claims and the advantages they offer over the prior art are discussed below in the context of the specific claims.

According to another aspect of the invention, as set out in independent claim 38 and described on page 17, line 18 through page 20, line 15, the invention is directed to an electronic file tracking system (10) comprising: a processor (20) for issuing control signals; a folder retainer (40, 50, 60, 85) having electrical contacts (80) communicatively coupled to the processor; and a plurality of file folders (70), each including an addressable device (76) for electrically coupling to the processor when the file folder is placed in the folder retainer, and a conductor (72, 73, Figs. 5 and 6) located on the file folder and configured so as to electrically couple the addressable device to the electrical contacts of the folder retainer when the file folder is positioned in any one of several different positions. For at least one file folder, the conductor is configured to electrically couple the addressable device to the electrical contacts

of the folder retainer at a plurality of locations on the file folder. The “plurality of locations” may include the side surface of the file folder (see claim 39), the edge surface of the file folder (see claim 40), or both (claim 41).

The inventive file tracking system provides additional flexibility in that it allows the location of file folders regardless of their orientation within or on a folder retainer. For example, files that are stacked vertically may be rotated in a different orientation from one another while still providing an electrical communication path between the addressable device on the upper most file folder and the conductors provided in the file tray in which the files are stacked. Further, the hanging files may be non-handed such that they may be hung in a file cabinet drawer in a position rotated 180° without interrupting the ability of the system to communicate with the addressable device on that file folder. Thus, the present invention provides great flexibility in the manner that employees may use the system and store file folders. As explained further below, the configuration of the electrical conductor on the file folder to enable electrical coupling of the addressable device to the electrical contacts of the folder retainer at a plurality of locations on the file folder is a major reason the system can provide the flexibility described above.

VI. Issues

The issues on appeal are whether:

1. Claim 1 is patentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over the combination of U.S. Patent No. 5,455,409 issued to Smith et al. and U.S. Patent No. 4,376,936 issued to Kott;
2. Claim 28 is patentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over the combination of Smith et al., Kott, and U.S. Patent No. 5,063,380 issued to Wakura;
3. Claim 30 is patentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over the combination of Smith et al., Kott, and Wakura;
4. Claim 34 is patentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over the combination of Smith et al., Kott, and Wakura;
5. Claim 35 is patentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over the combination of Smith et al., Kott, and Wakura;

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6. Claim 38 is patentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over the combination of Smith et al., Kott, and Wakura;
7. Claim 43 is patentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over the combination of Smith et al., Kott, and Wakura;
8. Claim 53 is patentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over the combination of Smith et al., Kott, and Wakura;
9. Claim 54 is patentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over the combination of Smith et al., Kott, and Wakura; and
10. Claim 63 is patentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over the combination of U.S. Patent No. 5,455,409 issued to Smith et al. and U.S. Patent No. 4,376,936 issued to Kott.

VII. Grouping of Claims

Claims 1-18 stand or fall together; claims 19-29 stand or fall together; claims 19-29 stand or fall together; claims 30-33 stand or fall together; claims 34, 36, and 42 stand or fall together; claims 35 and 37 stand or fall together; claims 38-41 stand or fall together; claims 43-52 stand or fall together; claim 53 stands or falls by itself; claims 54-62 stand or fall together; and claim 63 stands or falls by itself. The ten groups of claims stand or fall separately from one another for the reasons stated in detail below.

VIII. Arguments

The following is the requisite discussion as to why the nine claim groups stand or fall separately from one another.

A. Claim Groupings

1. Claims 1-18 vs. Claims 19-29

Claims 1-18 do not stand or fall with claims 19-29 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 1 recites features not recited in independent claim 28, which is representative of the claim group including claims 19-29, and because independent claim 28 recites some features not recited in independent claim 1. Specifically, independent

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claim 1 recites “a bus” and “a processor” where each file folder includes an addressable device “responsive to a control signal including the unique address associated with the addressable device to transmit a signal back to said processor so that said processor may maintain the file location of each file in said database,” whereas independent claim 28 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 28 recites that not only is a unique identification code associated with the file transmitted, but also that a second unique identification code, which is associated with the folder retainer, is also transmitted, whereas claim 1 does not recite this feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 1-18 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 19-29.

2. Claims 1-18 vs. Claims 30-33

Claims 1-18 do not stand or fall with claims 30-33 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 1 recites features not recited in independent claim 30, and because independent claim 30 recites some features not recited in independent claim 1. Specifically, independent claim 1 recites that each file folder includes an addressable device that is “responsive to a control signal including the unique address associated with the addressable device to transmit a signal back to said processor,” whereas independent claim 30 does not recite this feature. Further, independent claim 30 recites “a conductor provided in said folder retainer and coupled to said bus, for establishing a common communication path along which said control signals issued from said processor are transferred to the addressable switches of at least two of said file folders,” whereas independent claim 1 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 1-18 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 30-33.

3. Claims 1-18 vs. Claims 34, 36, and 42

Claims 1-18 do not stand or fall with claims 34, 36, and 42 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 1 recites features not recited in representative independent claim 34, and because independent claim 34 recites some features not recited in independent claim 1. Specifically, independent claim 1 recites “a bus” and that each addressable device on the file folders is “responsive to a control signal including the unique address associated with the

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addressable device to transmit a signal back to said processor,” whereas independent claim 34 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 34 recites that each file folder includes a conductor “configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in each of several different positions,” whereas independent claim 1 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 1-18 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 34, 36, and 42.

4. Claims 1-18 vs. Claims 35 and 37

Claims 1-18 do not stand or fall with claims 35 and 37 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 1 recites features not recited in representative independent claim 35, and because independent claim 35 recites some features not recited in independent claim 1. Specifically, independent claim 1 recites “a bus” and that each addressable device on the file folders is “responsive to a control signal including the unique address associated with the addressable device to transmit a signal back to said processor,” whereas independent claim 35 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 35 recites that each file folder includes a conductor “configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said folder retainer is positioned in any one of several different positions, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in each of several different orientations with respect to the electrical contacts,” whereas independent claim 1 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 1-18 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 35 and 37.

5. Claims 1-18 vs. Claims 38-41

Claims 1-18 do not stand or fall with claims 38-41 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 1 recites features not recited in independent claim 38, and because independent claim 38 recites some features not recited in independent claim 1. Specifically, independent claim 1 recites “a database,” “a bus,” and that each addressable device

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on the file folders is “responsive to a control signal including the unique address associated with the addressable device to transmit a signal back to said processor so that said processor may maintain the file location of each file in said database,” whereas independent claim 38 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 38 recites that each file folder includes “a conductor located on the file folder and configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in any one of several different positions, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer at a plurality of locations on said file folder,” whereas claim 1 does not require that any conductors on the file folders be so configured. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 1-18 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 38-41.

6. Claims 1-18 vs. Claims 43-52

Claims 1-18 do not stand or fall with claims 43-52 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 1 recites features not recited in independent claim 43, and because independent claim 43 recites some features not recited in independent claim 1. Specifically, independent claim 1 recites that each addressable device on the file folders is “responsive to a control signal including the unique address associated with the addressable device to transmit a signal back to said processor,” whereas independent claim 43 does not specifically recite any of this feature. Further, independent claim 43 recites that the database maintains not only the file location code and unique file addresses for a plurality of files, but also further maintains “file information for a plurality of files including at least one of a description of contents within the file, file classification, a key word list associated with the file, a title of the file, an originator of the file, accessibility permission list for the file, location descriptions associated with each file location code, and historical information for a plurality of files,” whereas independent claim 1 does not recite that the database includes any of this additional information. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 1-18 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 43-52.

7. Claims 1-18 vs. Claim 53

Claims 1-18 do not stand or fall with claim 53 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 1 recites features not recited in independent claim 53, and because independent claim 53 recites some features not recited in independent claim 1. Specifically, independent claim 1 recites “a database,” “a bus,” and that each addressable device on the file folders is “responsive to a control signal including the unique address associated with the addressable device to transmit a signal back to said processor,” whereas independent claim 53 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 53 recites that each file folder includes an addressable device connected to conductive contacts provided on an exterior surface of the file folder and adapted to be electrically coupled to the contacts of the folder retainer, “wherein said folder retainer is configured to support file folders that are stacked vertically upon one another such that each addressable device on each file folder in a vertical stack supported by said folder retainer is coupled to said electrical contacts of said folder retainer through the conductive contacts provided on file folders therebelow,” whereas independent claim 1 does not recite any such feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 1-18 may be held separately patentable relative to claim 53.

8. Claims 1-18 vs. Claims 54-62

Claims 1-18 do not stand or fall with claims 54-62 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 1 recites features not recited in independent claim 54, and because independent claim 54 recites some features not recited in independent claim 1. Specifically, independent claim 1 recites “a database,” “a bus,” and that each addressable device on the file folders is “responsive to a control signal including the unique address associated with the addressable device to transmit a signal back to said processor,” whereas independent claim 54 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 54 recites “at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders” and that each file folder includes an addressable device adapted to be coupled to the processor “when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers,” whereas independent claim 1 does not recite any of these

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features. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 1-18 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 54-62.

9. Claims 1-18 vs. Claim 63

Claims 1-18 do not stand or fall with claim 63 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 1 recites features not recited in independent claim 63, and because independent claim 63 recites some features not recited in independent claim 1. Specifically, independent claim 1 recites that each addressable device on the file folders is "responsive to a control signal including the unique address associated with the addressable device to transmit a signal back to said processor," whereas independent claim 63 does not specifically recite that feature. Further, independent claim 63 recites "a plurality of folder retainers connected to said processor by said bus, wherein at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders" and further recites "a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be electrically connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers.," whereas independent claim 1 does not recite any of these features. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 1-18 may be held separately patentable relative to claim 63.

10. Claims 19-29 vs. Claims 30-33

Claims 19-29 do not stand or fall with claims 30-33 and are considered separately patentable because representative independent claim 28 recites features not recited in independent claim 30, and because independent claim 30 recites some features not recited in independent claim 28. Specifically, independent claim 28 recites that not only is a unique identification code associated with the file transmitted, but also that a second unique identification code, which is associated with the folder retainer, is also transmitted, whereas independent claim 30 does not recite this feature. Further, independent claim 30 recites "a conductor provided in said folder retainer and coupled to said bus, for establishing a common communication path along which said control signals issued from said processor are transferred to the addressable switches of at least two of said file folders," whereas independent claim 28 does not recite such a feature. For

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these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 19-29 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 30-33.

11. Claims 19-29 vs. Claims 34, 36, and 42

Claims 19-29 do not stand or fall with claims 34, 36, and 42 and are considered separately patentable because representative independent claim 28 recites features not recited in independent claim 34, and because independent claim 34 recites some features not recited in independent claim 28. Specifically, independent claim 28 recites that not only is a unique identification code associated with the file transmitted, but also that a second unique identification code, which is associated with the folder retainer, is also transmitted, whereas independent claim 34 does not recite this feature. Further, independent claim 34 recites that each file folder includes a conductor "configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in each of several different positions," whereas independent claim 28 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 19-29 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 34, 36, and 42.

12. Claims 19-29 vs. Claims 35 and 37

Claims 19-29 do not stand or fall with claims 35 and 37 and are considered separately patentable because representative independent claim 28 recites features not recited in independent claim 35, and because independent claim 35 recites some features not recited in independent claim 28. Specifically, independent claim 28 recites that not only is a unique identification code associated with the file transmitted, but also that a second unique identification code, which is associated with the folder retainer, is also transmitted, whereas independent claim 35 does not recite this feature. Further, independent claim 35 recites that each file folder includes a conductor "configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said folder retainer is positioned in any one of several different positions, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in each of several different orientations with respect to the electrical

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contacts,” whereas independent claim 28 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 19-29 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 35 and 37.

13. Claims 19-29 vs. Claims 38-41

Claims 19-29 do not stand or fall with claims 38-41 and are considered separately patentable because representative independent claim 28 recites features not recited in independent claim 38, and because independent claim 38 recites some features not recited in independent claim 28. Specifically, independent claim 28 recites that not only is a unique identification code associated with the file transmitted, but also that a second unique identification code, which is associated with the folder retainer, is also transmitted, whereas independent claim 38 does not recite this feature. Further, independent claim 38 recites that each file folder includes “a conductor located on the file folder and configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in any one of several different positions, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically coupled said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer at a plurality of locations on said file folder,” whereas independent claim 28 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 19-29 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 38-41.

14. Claims 19-29 vs. Claims 43-52

Claims 19-29 do not stand or fall with claims 43-52 and are considered separately patentable because representative independent claim 28 recites features not recited in independent claim 43, and because independent claim 43 recites some features not recited in independent claim 28. Specifically, independent claim 28 recites that not only is a unique identification code associated with the file transmitted, but also that a second unique identification code, which is associated with the folder retainer, is also transmitted, whereas independent claim 43 does not recite this feature. Further, independent claim 43 recites that the database maintains not only the file location code and unique file addresses for a plurality of files, but also further maintains “file information for a plurality of files including at least one of a description of contents within the

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file, file classification, a key word list associated with the file, a title of the file, an originator of the file, accessibility permission list for the file, location descriptions associated with each file location code, and historical information for a plurality of files,” whereas independent claim 28 does not recite a database includes any of this additional information. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 19-29 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 43-52.

15. Claims 19-29 vs. Claim 53

Claims 19-29 do not stand or fall with claim 53 and are considered separately patentable because representative independent claim 28 recites features not recited in independent claim 53, and because independent claim 53 recites some features not recited in independent claim 28. Specifically, independent claim 28 recites that not only is a unique identification code associated with the file transmitted, but also that a second unique identification code, which is associated with the folder retainer, is also transmitted, whereas independent claim 53 does not recite this feature. Further, independent claim 53 recites that each file folder includes an addressable device connected to conductive contacts provided on an exterior surface of the file folder and adapted to be electrically coupled to the contacts of the folder retainer, “wherein said folder retainer is configured to support file folders that are stacked vertically upon one another such that each addressable device on each file folder in a vertical stack supported by said folder retainer is coupled to said electrical contacts of said folder retainer through the conductive contacts provided on file folders therebelow,” whereas independent claim 28 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 19-29 may be held separately patentable relative to claim 53.

16. Claims 19-29 vs. Claims 54-62

Claims 19-29 do not stand or fall with claims 54-62 and are considered separately patentable because representative independent claim 28 recites features not recited in representative independent claim 54, and because independent claim 54 recites some features not recited in independent claim 28. Specifically, independent claim 28 recites that not only is a unique identification code associated with the file transmitted, but also that a second unique

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identification code, which is associated with the folder retainer, is also transmitted, whereas independent claim 54 does not recite this feature. Further, independent claim 54 recites "at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders" and that each file folder includes an addressable device adapted to be coupled to the processor "when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers," whereas independent claim 28 does not recite this feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 19-29 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 54-62.

17. Claims 19-29 vs. Claim 63

Claims 19-29 do not stand or fall with claim 63 and are considered separately patentable because representative independent claim 28 recites features not recited in independent claim 63, and because independent claim 63 recites some features not recited in independent claim 28. Specifically, independent claim 28 recites not only is a unique identification code associated with the file transmitted, but also that a second unique identification code, which is associated with the folder retainer, is also transmitted, whereas independent claim 63 does not specifically recite that feature. Further, independent claim 63 recites "a plurality of folder retainers connected to said processor by said bus, wherein at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders" and further recites "a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be electrically connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers.," whereas independent claim 28 does not recite any of these features. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 19-29 may be held separately patentable relative to claim 63.

18. Claims 30-33 vs. Claims 34, 36, and 42

Claims 30-33 do not stand or fall with claims 34, 36, and 42 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 30 recites features not recited in representative independent claim 34, and because independent claim 34 recites some features not recited in independent claim 30. Specifically, independent claim 30 recites "a conductor provided in said

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folder retainer and coupled to said bus, for establishing a common communication path along which said control signals issued from said processor are transferred to the addressable switches of at least two of said file folders,” whereas independent claim 34 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 34 recites that each file folder includes a conductor “configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in each of several different positions,” whereas independent claim 30 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 30-33 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 34, 36, and 42.

19. Claims 30-33 vs. Claims 35 and 37

Claims 30-33 do not stand or fall with claims 35 and 37 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 30 recites features not recited in representative independent claim 35, and because independent claim 35 recites some features not recited in independent claim 30. Specifically, independent claim 30 recites “a conductor provided in said folder retainer and coupled to said bus, for establishing a common communication path along which said control signals issued from said processor are transferred to the addressable switches of at least two of said file folders,” whereas independent claim 35 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 35 recites that each file folder includes a conductor “configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said folder retainer is positioned in any one of several different positions, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in each of several different orientations with respect to the electrical contacts,” whereas independent claim 30 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 30-33 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 35 and 37.

20. Claims 30-33 vs. Claims 38-41

Claims 30-33 do not stand or fall with claims 38-41 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 30 recites features not recited in representative independent claim 38, and because independent claim 38 recites some features not recited in independent

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claim 30. Specifically, independent claim 30 recites "a conductor provided in said folder retainer and coupled to said bus, for establishing a common communication path along which said control signals issued from said processor are transferred to the addressable switches of at least two of said file folders," whereas independent claim 38 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 38 recites that each file folder includes "a conductor located on the file folder and configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in any one of several different positions, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically coupled said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer at a plurality of locations on said file folder," whereas independent claim 30 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 30-33 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 38-41.

21. Claims 30-33 vs. Claims 43-52

Claims 30-33 do not stand or fall with claims 43-52 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 30 recites features not recited in representative independent claim 43, and because independent claim 43 recites some features not recited in independent claim 30. Specifically, independent claim 30 recites "a conductor provided in said folder retainer and coupled to said bus, for establishing a common communication path along which said control signals issued from said processor are transferred to the addressable switches of at least two of said file folders," whereas independent claim 43 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 43 recites that the database maintains not only the file location code and unique file addresses for a plurality of files, but also further maintains "file information for a plurality of files including at least one of a description of contents within the file, file classification, a key word list associated with the file, a title of the file, an originator of the file, accessibility permission list for the file, location descriptions associated with each file location code, and historical information for a plurality of files," whereas independent claim 30 does not recite that the database includes any of this additional information. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 30-33 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 43-52.

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22. Claims 30-33 vs. Claim 53

Claims 30-33 do not stand or fall with claim 53 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 30 recites features not recited in representative independent claim 53, and because independent claim 53 recites some features not recited in independent claim 30. Specifically, independent claim 30 recites “a conductor provided in said folder retainer and coupled to said bus, for establishing a common communication path along which said control signals issued from said processor are transferred to the addressable switches of at least two of said file folders,” whereas independent claim 53 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 53 recites that each file folder includes an addressable device connected to conductive contacts provided on an exterior surface of the file folder and adapted to be electrically coupled to the contacts of the folder retainer, “wherein said folder retainer is configured to support file folders that are stacked vertically upon one another such that each addressable device on each file folder in a vertical stack supported by said folder retainer is coupled to said electrical contacts of said folder retainer through the conductive contacts provided on file folders therebelow,” whereas independent claim 30 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 30-33 may be held separately patentable relative to claim 53.

23. Claims 30-33 vs. Claims 54-62

Claims 30-33 do not stand or fall with claims 54-62 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 30 recites features not recited in representative independent claim 54, and because independent claim 54 recites some features not recited in independent claim 30. Specifically, independent claim 30 recites “a conductor provided in said folder retainer and coupled to said bus, for establishing a common communication path along which said control signals issued from said processor are transferred to the addressable switches of at least two of said file folders,” whereas independent claim 54 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 54 recites “at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders” and that each file folder includes an addressable device adapted to

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be coupled to the processor “when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers,” whereas independent claim 30 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 30-33 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 54-62.

24. Claims 30-33 vs. Claim 63

Claims 30-33 do not stand or fall with claim 63 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 30 recites features not recited in independent claim 63, and because independent claim 63 recites some features not recited in independent claim 30. Specifically, independent claim 30 recites “a conductor provided in said folder retainer and coupled to said bus, for establishing a common communication path along which said control signals issued from said processor are transferred to the addressable switches of at least two of said file folders,” whereas independent claim 63 does not specifically recite that feature. Further, independent claim 63 recites “a plurality of folder retainers connected to said processor by said bus, wherein at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders” and further recites “a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be electrically connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers.”, whereas independent claim 30 does not recite any of these features. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 30-33 may be held separately patentable relative to claim 63.

25. Claims 34, 36, and 42 vs. Claims 35 and 37

Claims 34, 36, and 42 do not stand or fall with claims 35 and 37 and are considered separately patentable because representative independent claim 34 recites features not recited in representative independent claim 35, and because independent claim 35 recites some features not recited in independent claim 34. Specifically, independent claim 34 recites “a database” whereas independent claim 35 does not specifically recite this feature. Further, independent claim 35 recites that each file folder includes a conductor “configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in each of several different orientations with respect to the electrical contacts,”

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whereas independent claim 34 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 34, 36, and 42 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 35 and 37.

26. Claims 34, 36, and 42 vs. Claims 38-41

Claims 34, 36, and 42 do not stand or fall with claims 38-41 and are considered separately patentable because representative independent claim 34 recites features not recited in representative independent claim 38, and because independent claim 38 recites some features not recited in independent claim 34. Specifically, independent claim 34 recites "a database," whereas independent claim 38 does not specifically recite this feature. Further, independent claim 38 recites that each file folder includes a conductor that is configured to electrically coupled said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer at a plurality of locations on said file folder," whereas independent claim 34 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 34, 36, and 42 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 38-41.

27. Claims 34, 36, and 42 vs. Claims 43-52

Claims 34, 36, and 42 do not stand or fall with claims 43-52 and are considered separately patentable because representative independent claim 34 recites features not recited in representative independent claim 43, and because independent claim 43 recites some features not recited in independent claim 34. Specifically, independent claim 34 recites that each file folder includes a conductor "configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in each of several different positions," whereas independent claim 43 does not specifically recite any such feature. Further, independent claim 43 recites that the database maintains not only the file location code and unique file addresses for a plurality of files, but also further maintains "file information for a plurality of files including at least one of a description of contents within the file, file classification, a key word list associated with the file, a title of the file, an originator of the file, accessibility permission list for the file, location descriptions associated with each file location code, and historical information for a plurality of files," whereas independent claim 34 does not

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recite that the database includes any of this additional information. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 34, 36, and 42 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 43-52.

28. Claims 34, 36, and 42 vs. Claim 53

Claims 34, 36, and 42 do not stand or fall with claim 53 and are considered separately patentable because representative independent claim 34 recites features not recited in representative independent claim 53, and because independent claim 53 recites some features not recited in independent claim 34. Specifically, independent claim 34 recites that each file folder includes a conductor "configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in each of several different positions," whereas independent claim 53 does not specifically recite this feature. Further, independent claim 53 recites that each file folder includes an addressable device connected to conductive contacts provided on an exterior surface of the file folder and adapted to be electrically coupled to the contacts of the folder retainer, "wherein said folder retainer is configured to support file folders that are stacked vertically upon one another such that each addressable device on each file folder in a vertical stack supported by said folder retainer is coupled to said electrical contacts of said folder retainer through the conductive contacts provided on file folders therebelow," whereas independent claim 34 does not recite any of those features. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 34, 36, and 42 may be held separately patentable relative to claim 53.

29. Claims 34, 36, and 42 vs. Claims 54-62

Claims 34, 36, and 42 do not stand or fall with claims 54-62 and are considered separately patentable because representative independent claim 34 recites features not recited in representative independent claim 54, and because independent claim 54 recites some features not recited in independent claim 34. Specifically, independent claim 34 recites that each file folder includes a conductor "configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in each of several different positions," whereas independent claim 54 does not specifically recite this feature.

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Further, independent claim 54 recites “at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders” and that each file folder includes an addressable device adapted to be coupled to the processor “when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers,” whereas independent claim 34 does not recite any of those features. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 34, 36, and 42 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 54-62.

30. Claims 34, 36, and 42 vs. Claim 63

Claims 34, 36, and 42 do not stand or fall with claim 63 and are considered separately patentable because representative independent claim 34 recites features not recited in independent claim 63, and because independent claim 63 recites some features not recited in independent claim 34. Specifically, independent claim 34 recites that each file folder includes a conductor “configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in each of several different positions,” whereas independent claim 63 does not specifically recite that feature. Further, independent claim 63 recites “a plurality of folder retainers connected to said processor by said bus, wherein at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders” and further recites “a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be electrically connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers.,” whereas independent claim 34 does not recite any of these features. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 34, 36, and 42 may be held separately patentable relative to claim 63.

31. Claims 35 and 37 vs. Claims 38-41

Claims 35 and 37 do not stand or fall with claims 38-41 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 35 recites features not recited in independent claim 38, and because independent claim 38 recites some features not recited in independent claim 35. Specifically, independent claim 35 recites that each file folder includes a conductor that is

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“configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in each of several different orientations with respect to the electrical contacts,” whereas independent claim 38 does not specifically recite this feature. Further, independent claim 38 recites that each file folder includes a conductor that is “configured to electrically coupled said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer at a plurality of locations on said file folder,” whereas independent claim 35 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 35 and 37 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 38-41.

32. Claims 35 and 37 vs. Claims 43-52

Claims 35 and 37 do not stand or fall with claims 43-52 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 35 recites features not recited in independent claim 43, and because independent claim 43 recites some features not recited in independent claim 35. Specifically, independent claim 35 recites that each file folder includes a conductor “configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said folder retainer is positioned in any one of several different positions, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in each of several different orientations with respect to the electrical contacts,” whereas independent claim 43 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 43 recites that “a database” that maintains not only the file location code and unique file addresses for a plurality of files, but also further maintains “file information for a plurality of files including at least one of a description of contents within the file, file classification, a key word list associated with the file, a title of the file, an originator of the file, accessibility permission list for the file, location descriptions associated with each file location code, and historical information for a plurality of files,” whereas independent claim 35 does not recite a database, let alone a database storing such information. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 35 and 37 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 43-52.

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33. Claims 35 and 37 vs. Claim 53

Claims 35 and 37 do not stand or fall with claim 53 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 35 recites features not recited in independent claim 53, and because independent claim 53 recites some features not recited in independent claim 35. Specifically, independent claim 35 recites that each file folder includes a conductor "configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said folder retainer is positioned in any one of several different positions, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in each of several different orientations with respect to the electrical contacts," whereas independent claim 53 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 53 recites that each file folder includes an addressable device connected to conductive contacts provided on an exterior surface of the file folder and adapted to be electrically coupled to the contacts of the folder retainer, "wherein said folder retainer is configured to support file folders that are stacked vertically upon one another such that each addressable device on each file folder in a vertical stack supported by said folder retainer is coupled to said electrical contacts of said folder retainer through the conductive contacts provided on file folders therebelow," whereas independent claim 35 does not recite any of those features. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 35 and 37 may be held separately patentable relative to claim 53.

34. Claims 35 and 37 vs. Claims 54-62

Claims 35 and 37 do not stand or fall with claims 54-62 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 35 recites features not recited in representative independent claim 54, and because independent claim 54 recites some features not recited in independent claim 35. Specifically, independent claim 35 recites that each file folder includes a conductor "configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said folder retainer is positioned in any one of several different positions, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in each of several different orientations with respect to the electrical contacts,"

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whereas independent claim 54 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 54 recites "at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders" and that each file folder includes an addressable device adapted to be coupled to the processor "when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers," whereas independent claim 35 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 35 and 37 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 54-62.

35. Claims 35 and 37 vs. Claim 63

Claims 35 and 37 do not stand or fall with claim 63 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 35 recites features not recited in independent claim 63, and because independent claim 63 recites some features not recited in independent claim 35. Specifically, independent claim 35 recites that each file folder includes a conductor "configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said folder retainer is positioned in any one of several different positions, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in each of several different orientations with respect to the electrical contacts," whereas independent claim 63 does not specifically recite that feature. Further, independent claim 63 recites "a plurality of folder retainers connected to said processor by said bus, wherein at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders" and further recites "a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be electrically connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers.," whereas independent claim 35 does not recite any of these features. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 35 and 37 may be held separately patentable relative to claim 63.

36. Claims 38-41 vs. Claims 43-52

Claims 38-41 do not stand or fall with claims 43-52 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 38 recites features not recited in independent claim 43, and

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because independent claim 43 recites some features not recited in independent claim 38. Specifically, independent claim 38 recites that each file folder includes “a conductor located on the file folder and configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in any one of several different positions, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically coupled said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer at a plurality of locations on said file folder,” whereas independent claim 43 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 43 recites that the database maintains not only the file location code and unique file addresses for a plurality of files, but also further maintains “file information for a plurality of files including at least one of a description of contents within the file, file classification, a key word list associated with the file, a title of the file, an originator of the file, accessibility permission list for the file, location descriptions associated with each file location code, and historical information for a plurality of files,” whereas independent claim 38 does not recite that the database includes any of this additional information. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 38-41 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 43-52.

37. Claims 38-41 vs. Claim 53

Claims 38-41 do not stand or fall with claim 53 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 38 recites features not recited in independent claim 53, and because independent claim 53 recites some features not recited in independent claim 38. Specifically, independent claim 38 recites that each file folder includes “a conductor located on the file folder and configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in any one of several different positions, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically coupled said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer at a plurality of locations on said file folder,” whereas independent claim 53 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 53 recites that each file folder includes an addressable device connected to conductive contacts provided on an exterior surface of the file folder and adapted to be electrically coupled to the contacts of the folder retainer, “wherein said folder retainer is

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configured to support file folders that are stacked vertically upon one another such that each addressable device on each file folder in a vertical stack supported by said folder retainer is coupled to said electrical contacts of said folder retainer through the conductive contacts provided on file folders therebelow,” whereas independent claim 38 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 38-41 may be held separately patentable relative to claim 53.

38. Claims 38-41 vs. Claims 54-62

Claims 38-41 do not stand or fall with claims 54-62 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 38 recites features not recited in representative independent claim 54, and because independent claim 54 recites some features not recited in independent claim 38. Specifically, independent claim 38 recites that each file folder includes “a conductor located on the file folder and configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in any one of several different positions, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer at a plurality of locations on said file folder,” whereas independent claim 54 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 54 recites “at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders” and that each file folder includes an addressable device adapted to be coupled to the processor “when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers,” whereas independent claim 38 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 38-41 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 54-62.

39. Claims 38-41 vs. Claim 63

Claims 38-41 do not stand or fall with claim 63 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 38 recites features not recited in independent claim 63, and because independent claim 63 recites some features not recited in independent claim 38. Specifically, independent claim 38 recites that each file folder includes “a conductor located on the file folder

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and configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in any one of several different positions, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer at a plurality of locations on said file folder,” whereas independent claim 63 does not specifically recite that feature. Further, independent claim 63 recites “a plurality of folder retainers connected to said processor by said bus, wherein at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders” and further recites “a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be electrically connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers.,” whereas independent claim 38 does not recite any of these features. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 38-41 may be held separately patentable relative to claim 63.

40. Claims 43-52 vs. Claim 53

Claims 43-52 do not stand or fall with claim 53 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 43 recites features not recited in independent claim 53, and because independent claim 53 recites some features not recited in independent claim 43. Specifically, independent claim 43 recites that the database maintains not only the file location code and unique file addresses for a plurality of files, but also further maintains “file information for a plurality of files including at least one of a description of contents within the file, file classification, a key word list associated with the file, a title of the file, an originator of the file, accessibility permission list for the file, location descriptions associated with each file location code, and historical information for a plurality of files,” whereas independent claim 53 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 53 recites that each file folder includes an addressable device connected to conductive contacts provided on an exterior surface of the file folder and adapted to be electrically coupled to the contacts of the folder retainer, “wherein said folder retainer is configured to support file folders that are stacked vertically upon one another such that each addressable device on each file folder in a vertical stack supported by said folder retainer is coupled to said electrical contacts of said folder retainer

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through the conductive contacts provided on file folders therebelow,” whereas independent claim 43 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 43-52 may be held separately patentable relative to claim 53.

41. Claims 43-52 vs. Claims 54-62

Claims 43-52 do not stand or fall with claims 54-62 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 43 recites features not recited in representative independent claim 54, and because independent claim 54 recites some features not recited in independent claim 43. Specifically, independent claim 43 recites that the database maintains not only the file location code and unique file addresses for a plurality of files, but also further maintains “file information for a plurality of files including at least one of a description of contents within the file, file classification, a key word list associated with the file, a title of the file, an originator of the file, accessibility permission list for the file, location descriptions associated with each file location code, and historical information for a plurality of files,” whereas independent claim 54 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 54 recites “at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders” and that each file folder includes an addressable device adapted to be coupled to the processor “when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers,” whereas independent claim 43 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 43-52 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 54-62.

42. Claims 43-52 vs. Claim 63

Claims 43-52 do not stand or fall with claim 63 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 43 recites features not recited in independent claim 63, and because independent claim 63 recites some features not recited in independent claim 43. Specifically, independent claim 43 recites that the database maintains not only the file location code and unique file addresses for a plurality of files, but also further maintains “file information for a plurality of files including at least one of a description of contents within the file, file classification, a key word list associated with the file, a title of the file, an originator of the file,

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accessibility permission list for the file, location descriptions associated with each file location code, and historical information for a plurality of files,” whereas independent claim 63 does not specifically recite that feature. Further, independent claim 63 recites “a plurality of folder retainers connected to said processor by said bus, wherein at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders” and further recites “a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be electrically connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers.”, whereas independent claim 43 does not recite any of these features. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 43-52 may be held separately patentable relative to claim 63.

43. Claim 53 vs. Claims 54-62

Claim 53 does not stand or fall with claims 54-62 and is considered separately patentable because independent claim 53 recites features not recited in representative independent claim 54, and because independent claim 54 recites some features not recited in independent claim 53. Specifically, independent claim 53 recites that each file folder includes an addressable device connected to conductive contacts provided on an exterior surface of the file folder and adapted to be electrically coupled to the contacts of the folder retainer, “wherein said folder retainer is configured to support file folders that are stacked vertically upon one another such that each addressable device on each file folder in a vertical stack supported by said folder retainer is coupled to said electrical contacts of said folder retainer through the conductive contacts provided on file folders therebelow,” whereas independent claim 54 does not specifically recite any of those features. Further, independent claim 54 recites “at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders” and that each file folder includes an addressable device adapted to be coupled to the processor “when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers,” whereas independent claim 53 does not recite such a feature. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claim 53 may be held separately patentable relative to claims 54-62.

44. Claim 53 vs. Claim 63

Claim 53 does not stand or fall with claim 63 and is considered separately patentable because independent claim 53 recites features not recited in independent claim 63, and because independent claim 63 recites some features not recited in independent claim 53. Specifically, independent claim 53 recites that each file folder includes an addressable device connected to conductive contacts provided on an exterior surface of the file folder and adapted to be electrically coupled to the contacts of the folder retainer, "wherein said folder retainer is configured to support file folders that are stacked vertically upon one another such that each addressable device on each file folder in a vertical stack supported by said folder retainer is coupled to said electrical contacts of said folder retainer through the conductive contacts provided on file folders therebelow," whereas independent claim 63 does not specifically recite that feature. Further, independent claim 63 recites "a plurality of folder retainers connected to said processor by said bus, wherein at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders" and further recites "a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be electrically connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers.," whereas independent claim 53 does not recite any of these features. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claim 53 may be held separately patentable relative to claim 63.

45. Claims 54-62 vs. Claim 63

Claims 54-62 do not stand or fall with claim 63 and are considered separately patentable because independent claim 54 recites features not recited in independent claim 63, and because independent claim 63 recites some features not recited in independent claim 54. Specifically, independent claim 54 recites "at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders" and that each file folder includes an addressable device adapted to be coupled to the processor "when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers," whereas independent claim 63 does not specifically recite that feature. Further, independent claim 63 recites "a plurality of folder retainers connected to said processor by said bus, wherein at least one of said folder

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retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders” and further recites “a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be electrically connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers.” whereas independent claim 54 does not recite any of these features. For these reasons, Appellants contemplate that claims 54-62 may be held separately patentable relative to claim 63.

In the arguments below, brief descriptions are provided for both of the applied references followed by Appellants’ arguments as to why *prima facie* obviousness has not been established based upon the three cited references.

B. The References

Although it is recognized that one cannot show non-obviousness by attacking references individually where the rejection is based on a combination of references, *In re Keller*, 642 F.2d 413, 208 USPQ 871 (CCPA 1981) and *In re Merck & Co., Inc.*, 800 F.2d 1091, 231 USPQ 375 (Fed. Cir. 1986), the teachings in the individual references must nevertheless be considered when analyzing whether one of ordinary skill in the art would have considered combining such teachings and whether the hypothetical structure that would have resulted from the combined teachings would have included all the claimed features. For these reasons, the individual references applied in the rejections are first discussed separately below to allow for a complete understanding of what these references would have suggested to one of ordinary skill in the art and to establish a basis for Appellants’ position that one of ordinary skill in the art would not have considered combining the reference teachings in the manner contemplated by the Examiner.

1. U.S. Patent No. 5,455,409 Issued to Smith et al.

Smith et al. discloses an apparatus and method for monitoring the location of a plurality of computer tapes and for identifying the current location of a selected tape. More particularly, the apparatus includes at least one tape carrier (12a-12o, Fig. 6) each having a plurality of slots (30, Fig. 2) for receiving a tape cartridge (10, Fig. 1). Each slot includes a contact pad 38 (Fig. 3A) including a plurality of electrical contacts for contacting

corresponding contacts 22 (Figs. 1 and 3B) provided on the tape cartridge 10. Each tape cartridge includes a memory device for storing a unique volume/serial number identifying that tape cartridge. As shown in Fig. 13, the contact pad (38a-38c) associated with each slot includes four contact terminals (40a-40d) - two for receiving power, one for providing an enable signal to the memory device on the tape cartridge positioned within the slot, and one for receiving the unique volume/serial number from the memory device on the tape cartridge provided therefrom when an enable signal is sent to the contact pad associated with the slot in which the tape cartridge is located.

Referring to Fig. 6, each of the tape carriers 12 includes a control circuit 42 having a microcontroller 300 (Fig. 13). Each of the microcontrollers 300 is coupled to a host computer 52. When a particular tape cartridge is to be located using this apparatus, the volume/serial number of the tape is input into host computer 52 and subsequently transmitted from the host computer to each of the control circuits 42 associated with the tape carriers 12. The microcontrollers 300 within the control circuits 42 respond to the tape request signal including the volume/serial number by comparing the volume serial/number to those stored in its memory. The microcontroller 300 periodically polls the memories of each tape cartridge stored in the slots of the tape carrier to determine which tapes are present in the associated tape carrier 12.

To poll each of the tape cartridges, microcontroller 300 transmits an enable signal over a dedicated line 45b, 332, or 334 (Fig. 13) associated with a particular slot of the tape carrier. If there is a tape cartridge in that slot, the memory device of the tape cartridge responds to the enable signal by allowing its volume/serial number to be read by microcontroller 300 over line 45a, which is commonly connected to all of the slot contact pads. By sequentially transmitting enable signals over the dedicated lines associated with each respective slot, microcontroller 300 knows to which slot it last sent an enable signal, and thus knows to which slot a received volume/serial number corresponds. Microcontroller 300 thereby stores the received volume/serial number in its memory at an address location dedicated to the particular slot from which the volume/serial number was received. Microcontroller 300 then continues to sequentially and separately enable the memory devices of each tape cartridge stored in one of

its slots and stores the volume/serial number sent by those tape cartridges in memory address locations associated with each respective slot.

Once polling is completed, microcontroller 300 compares the requested volume/serial number received from host computer 52 to the volume/serial numbers stored in its memory. If the requested volume/serial number is not found in its memory, microcontroller 300 does not respond to host computer 52. If microcontroller 300 determines that the requested volume/serial number corresponds to a volume/serial number stored in its memory, microcontroller 300 signals host computer 52 by identifying itself to host computer 52 and then illuminates a lamp positioned on the front of the tape carrier that is associated with the slot in which the requested tape is located. Meanwhile, host computer 52 displays the identification of the tape carrier whose microcontroller responded to the tape request. The location of the requested tape may then be transmitted to a robotic arm that automatically retrieves the requested tape.

2. U.S. Patent No. 4,376,936 Issued to Kott

The Kott patent discloses a docket card-locating device whereby each docket card folder includes a memory having a unique code stored therein, and an indicator light that is illuminated when a control signal is sent over a conductive rail upon which the docket card folders are hung that includes the code stored in the memory for that docket card folder. The Kott device, however, does not disclose that the devices on each docket card folder can, in any way, send reply signals back to the control circuit. Further, the Kott device does not maintain any form of database including the identification codes of the docket cards contained within the docket card box.

3. U.S. Patent No. 5,063,380 Issued to Wakura

The Wakura patent discloses a system for searching for files. As best shown in Fig. 5, a plurality of bookcases 10 are provided each having a plurality of shelves in which infrared transmitters and receivers are located so as to be in optical communication with corresponding transmitters and receivers positioned within the spine of the folder binder. The infrared receivers and transmitters located in the shelves are in electrical communication with an RF

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repeater 24. The RF repeater 24 is coupled by a wireless communication link with a receiver/transmitter 6 connected to a personal computer 1. A user may enter a request for a particular file on personal computer 1, which in turn causes an ID number for the file to be transmitted from receiver/transmitter 6. Each of the repeaters 24 receives the ID signal and causes the infrared transmitters in each of its shelves to transmit the ID to the infrared receivers in each of the file binders. The file having that ID responds to receipt of the infrared signal by illuminating an indicator LED 8 on the file folder and by transmitting an infrared signal back to the infrared receivers embedded within the shelf. Upon receiving a signal from the infrared receiver in the shelf, the repeater 24 may light indicator light 25 and send a signal back to receiver/transmitter 6 to advise computer 1 of the location of the file folder.

C. Legal Considerations

Appellants respectfully submit that a *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been established. The requirements for making a *prima facie* case of obviousness are described in MPEP §2143 as follows:

To establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, three basic criteria must be met. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings. Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. Finally, the prior art reference (or references when combined) must teach or suggest all the claim limitations.

The teaching or suggestion to make the claimed combination and the reasonable expectation of success *must both be found in the prior art*, and not based on applicant's disclosure. *In re Vaeck*, 947 F.2d 488, 20 USPQ2d 1438 (Fed. Cir. 1991). [Emphasis added]

Appellants submit that one of ordinary skill in the art would not have considered modifying the Smith et al. system to incorporate the features of Kott. Further, even assuming that one skilled in the art would have been motivated to make such a combination, the combined teachings of Smith et al. and Kott fail to teach or suggest each and every element recited in each of the claims.

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MPEP §2143.01 provides further guidance as to what is necessary in showing that there was motivation known in the prior art to modify a reference teaching. Specifically, MPEP §2143.01 states:

The mere fact that references can be combined or modified does not render the resultant combination obvious *unless the prior art also suggests the desirability of the combination*. *In re Mills*, 916 F.2d 680, 16 USPQ2d 1430 (Fed. Cir. 1990). [Emphasis added]

For the reasons stated below, Appellants submit that the requisite motivation for combining the teachings of the Smith et al. and Kott patents has not been established and, therefore, *prima facie* obviousness has not been established. More specifically, Appellants submit that neither Smith et al. nor Kott suggest the *desirability* of the modification that would be necessary to provide a system that even remotely resembles the claimed invention.

1. Claims 1-18

Of this group of claims, only claim 1 is independent and claims 2-18 all depend from claim 1. Thus, independent claim 1 is representative of this claim group. Independent claim 1 was rejected as being obvious over Smith et al. in view of Kott.

Independent claim 1 defines a file tracking system comprising a combination of elements including at least “a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be electrically connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in said folder retainer, *each addressable device being responsive to a control signal including the unique address associated with the addressable device* to transmit a signal back to said processor so that said processor may maintain the file location of each file in said database.”

As generally discussed above, this aspect of the present invention contributes to the system's ability to track the location of files particularly when a hierarchy of addressable switches is employed for each folder retainer and bus segment. Specifically, the processor may locate a requested file by activating the bus segments between the processor and the last known location of the requested file (including the segment of the bus in a particular folder retainer), transmitting a control signal including the unique identification code of the file on the activated segments of the bus, and awaiting receipt of a return signal from the requested

file folder that indicates that the requested file folder is located in the folder retainer having its connecting bus segment activated at that time. If no return signal is received, the processor sequentially activates each segment of the system bus until a return signal is received, at which point the processor can identify the location of the file folder.

The Smith et al. system is designed to track tape cartridges or other articles when placed in separate discrete slots. The system is constructed for use in computer tape cartridge libraries where robotic arms remove and place the tape cartridges in their respective slots. To separately track file folders, the system would require that a separate slot be provided for each file folder. Such an arrangement is clearly impractical¹ in an office environment where file folders may be stacked on top of one another on a desk, hanging in a vertical file cabinet, or placed on the shelf of a book cabinet. Despite the fact that the background portion of the Smith et al. patent refers to the organization and management of "articles such as books, tapes, cassettes, and the like," one skilled in the art who was seeking to construct a practical system for tracking file folders in an office environment clearly would not have considered a system such as that disclosed in Smith et al.

As discussed above, Smith et al. system has dedicated lines run to each slot in a tape carrier such that a memory enable signal may be specifically directed to the contact pad in a slot where a tape cartridge may be positioned. The memory enable signal sent by the microcontroller 300 is not a signal that is unique to any tape cartridge, but rather is the same signal sent separately and sequentially over each dedicated line. The Smith et al. patent does not disclose or suggest the need to transmit a *unique address* of a particular tape cartridge to the tape itself over the dedicated line. Because the memory enable signal that is sent by the microcontroller 300 in Smith et al. to each tape cartridge is sent over a separate isolated dedicated line, there is absolutely no need to transmit the unique address (*i.e.*, volume/serial number) of the tape cartridge over that line to cause it to respond by transmitting its

¹ The Examiner states on pages 9-10, paragraph (c) of the last Office Action "practicality is not an issue when considering obviousness combination rejections." Clearly, the practicality of a modification is a factor one skilled in the art would consider in determining the requisite desirability of the modification. In paragraph (d) on page 10 of the last Office Action, the Examiner incorrectly states that Smith does send a unique signal to the cassette. Appellants disagree for the reasons stated below.

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volume/serial number back to the microcontroller. Further, because the microcontroller does not access a database prior to sending a polling signal, it would not know which volume/serial numbers to transmit over each dedicated line, nor would it know how to obtain a response from a tape cartridge that was newly added into a tape carrier slot since it would not know its volume/serial number to begin with. Thus, Smith et al. does not teach or suggest that each addressable device on the tape cartridges be responsive to a control signal that includes the unique volume/serial number associated with that tape cartridge to transmit a signal back to the microcontroller, as required by independent claim 1.

In the remarks portion of the Office Action mailed June 22, 2000, the Examiner characterized Appellants' prior arguments as follows:

a. The applicant argues that the references do not show an addressable file folder responsive to a control signal including a unique address to transmit a signal back to the processor so that the processor may maintain the file location in a database.

With respect to the above paragraph, the Examiner quotes the Abstract of Smith and contends:

It is clear from this section of Smith shows [sic] an addressable file folder responsive to a control signal including a unique address to transmit a signal back to the processor (footnote 2 above) so that the processor may maintain the file location in a database (footnote 1 above).

Appellants submit that the Abstract of Smith et al. does not support the above-quoted conclusions. Nowhere does the Abstract of Smith et al. state that the control signal sent by the controller 300 would include a unique address of the file folder. While the Abstract of Smith et al. does disclose that the system polls and searches the system to identify the carrier in which a requested article is stored, the manner by which the Smith et al. system polls and searches the system to identify the location of such a cartridge is much different than that utilized in the claimed invention. Specifically, the Smith et al. system includes a host computer 52 that sends out a request signal that uniquely identifies the requested tape. This request signal, however, is not transmitted to the tape cartridges, but rather is sent to the microcontrollers 300 of the various tape carriers. The microcontrollers 300 merely transmit a memory read enable signal separately to each of the tape cartridges over a dedicated line

coupled to an associated slot such that the tape cartridge in the slot will respond by transmitting its unique volume/serial number back to the polling microcontroller. Thus, the memory read enable signal clearly does not include a unique address corresponding to the tape carrier, nor would there be any reason to modify the Smith et al. system such that a unique address is transmitted to each tape cartridge.

As discussed further below, Kott does not teach or suggest an addressable file folder responsive to a control signal including a unique address to transmit a signal back to the processor. Thus, Kott does not teach or suggest the deficiency noted above with respect to Smith et al. Further, because Smith et al. utilizes a dedicated line connected between the microcontroller 300 and each separate tape cartridge slot, there would be absolutely no reason why the microcontroller would need to transmit a control signal that included a unique address for a tape cartridge. Again, while the host processor 52 of Smith et al. may transmit the volume/serial number of a requested tape cartridge, the volume/serial number transmitted from the host processor is never received by the tape cartridge itself. Thus, one skilled in the art would not have found it to be desirable to modify the Smith et al. system based on the teachings of Kott.

As noted above, Kott discloses a device for locating docket cards in a box whereby a controller transmits a signal including a unique ID code of a selected docket card simultaneously to all the docket cards in the box. An indicator on the docket card having the unique ID code then illuminates. The indicator devices in the Kott device do not transmit any signals back to the controller.

Although it is not very clear how exactly the Examiner believes that one of ordinary skill in the art would have constructed a system based upon the combined teachings of Smith et al. and Kott, it is apparent that there are certain features of Kott that one of ordinary skill in the art would not have considered implementing in the Smith et al. system since it would destroy some important functions that are performed by the Smith et al. system. For example, because the Smith et al. system utilizes a dedicated and separate line for each tape slot and indicator light, the Smith et al. system does not transmit the identification code of the tape to the tape itself or to the indicator light at any time. Although the Kott patent does require that the code for the file be transmitted to the indicator device mounted on the docket card folder,

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the fact that the Kott docket card box does not allow for the docket card folders to transmit their identification codes back to a processing circuit would destroy the ability of the Smith et al. system to determine the location of a particular item in a plurality of such retainers if the particular implementation in Kott were somehow used in the Smith et al. system.

In attempting to assess how exactly the Examiner believes one skilled in the art might have considered modifying the Smith et al. system in accordance with the teachings of Kott, Appellants note that the Examiner states on page 9, lines 3-4 of the last Office Action that clear motivation is given in the above rejections for combining the teachings of Smith et al. and Kott. In these rejections, the only apparent motivation listed is found on page 3, line 9-12. Specifically, the Examiner states that it would have been obvious to utilize the folder of Kott "since such would provide the cheap communication with the file." The Examiner further states on page 10, paragraph (d) that Kott teaches a shared bus for communicating a polling signal and that this shared bus reduces wiring costs and requires that each communication to the folder include a unique identifier. Based on these observations, it is apparent that the Examiner believes that one skilled in the art would have considered replacing the various dedicated lines running between the microcontroller 300 and each of the tape slots in the Smith et al. system with a shared bus. Clearly, a non-unique memory enable signal could not be then sent by the microcontroller 300 over the shared bus since each of the tape cartridges would simultaneously respond by sending their unique identifiers over the shared return bus. Thus, one would need to reprogram microcontroller 300 to transmit a unique identifier for the requested tape cartridge. Assuming, *arguendo*, that one skilled in the art would have been motivated to make these modifications, it is still not clear to Appellants how then the Smith et al. system would be able to determine in which tape slot a particular tape cartridge is located. Specifically, assuming the microcontroller 300 sent a control signal including a unique identifier for the requested tape cartridge over a shared bus to each of the tape cartridges, and assuming that the identified tape cartridge responded over the shared return bus, microcontroller 300 would be unable to determine from which tape slot the return acknowledgement signal originated and thus would not be able to identify in which tape slot the identified tape cartridge is located. This clearly would destroy primary functions of the Smith et al. system. To the extent the Examiner still maintains that one skilled in the art

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would have been willing to make the modification at the expense of these functions, Appellants submit that such reasoning can only be based upon impermissible hindsight reconstruction of the claimed invention.

As stated above, there would have been no reason why one skilled in the art would have considered modifying the Smith et al. system based on Kott, and even if such motivation existed, the resultant system would not include all the features of claim 1. Thus, claims 1-18 are allowable over Smith et al. and Kott whether considered separately or in combination.

With respect to claims 2-18, which were not specifically addressed in the Appeal Brief, Appellants note that each of these claims depends from independent claim 1 and submits that these claims are allowable for at least those reasons stated above with respect to independent claim 1. Of these dependent claims, claims 7-10, 15, and 17 are rejected using additional secondary references. Specifically, Foster, Doyle, "Touch The Future," and Leighton were used by the Examiner to attempt to show the features recited in claims 7-10, 15, and 17. Appellants submit that none of these references teaches or suggests the deficiencies noted above with respect to Smith et al. and Kott as applied to claim 1.

2. Claims 19-29

Of this group of claims, claims 19, 20, 23, and 28 are independent. Claims 21 and 22 depend from claim 20, claims 24-27 depend from claim 23, and claim 29 depends from claim 28. Appellants have selected independent claim 28 to be representative of this claim group insofar as it appears to be the broadest claim of the group. Independent claim 28 was rejected as being obvious over Smith et al. in view of Kott and Wakura.

Independent claim 28 is directed to a method of locating a file including at least the steps of: accessing a database to determine a present location of the file, a unique identification code associated with a folder retainer in which the file is located, and a unique identification code associated with the file; and transmitting a control signal to the file, the control signal including the unique identification code of the file and the unique identification code of the folder retainer. These steps relate to the hierarchy employed by the present invention that maintains not only a unique identification code for each file, but also a unique identification code associated with the folder retainer in which the file is located. It is through

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the use of this hierarchy that this present invention may determine and track the location of files within the system.

None of the references whether considered separately or in combination teaches a system whereby two unique addresses are accessed from a database and then transmitted in a single file request. Smith et al. fails to teach or suggest these features. Because the memory devices in Smith et al. are distributed and located at the locations corresponding to the tape carriers, there would be no need to first access these memory devices to determine the location of a tape and the unique volume/serial number associated with the tape carrier. Further, there would be no need in the Smith et al. system to transmit a control signal that includes both the code of the file and the code of the folder retainer. Therefore, despite any teachings in the secondary references that may suggest the transmittance of a control signal including a unique identification code of a folder retainer, it would not have been obvious to modify the Smith et al. system to incorporate such a feature, since there appears to be no reason why this would add any desirable function or feature to the Smith et al. system. The fact that the Examiner contends that it would have been obvious to incorporate such features into the Smith et al. system suggests the Examiner has relied upon impermissible hindsight to reconstruct the present invention.

Regarding the use of hindsight, MPEP §2142 states:

To reach a proper determination under 35 U.S.C. §103, the Examiner must step backward in time and into the shoes worn by the hypothetical 'person of ordinary skill in the art' when the invention was unknown and just before it was made. In view of all factual information, the Examiner must then make a determination whether the claimed invention 'as a whole' would have been obvious at the time to that person. Knowledge of applicant's disclosure must be put aside in reaching this determination, yet kept in mind in order to determine the 'differences' conduct the search and evaluate the 'subject matter as a whole' of the invention. The tendency to resort to 'hindsight' based upon applicant's disclosure is often difficult to avoid due to the very nature of the examination process. However, impermissible hindsight must be avoided and the legal conclusion must be reached on the basis of the facts gleaned from the prior art.

Appellants see no reasonable basis why one skilled in the art would have even considered the modifications proposed by the Examiner without having prior knowledge of

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Appellants' invention. Accordingly, Appellants submit that a *prima facie* case has not been established with respect to representative independent claim 28.

In the last Office Action, the Examiner merely points out that Wakura discloses a file locating system that sends requests to locate files to various file cabinets, each of which is in communication with the files it is currently storing. Such a system, however, would not result in the specific structure that is presently claimed in independent claim 28. Moreover, it is not at all clear why one skilled in the art would have considered modifying the Smith et al. system to include such a feature since the Smith et al. system is designed for use with a robotic arm that is moved to the identified location of the tape. The robotic arm would not require any use of the identification of a particular cabinet in which the tape is stored since each location is otherwise unique and identifiable by the robotic arm.

Also in the last Office Action at pages 12-13, paragraph (k), the Examiner states that "Smith suggests sending a signal directly to the object (folder) that inherently uniquely identifies the folder and the cabinet where the folder is located." Appellants strongly disagree with this statement. First, as noted above with respect to claim 1, Smith et al. does not teach or suggest sending a signal that uniquely identifies a folder to the file folders themselves. Further, Smith et al. clearly does not suggest sending a signal that identifies a file cabinet where a folder is located. At the time that the host processor 52 sends out a file request to the various tape carriers, it does not know the location or identity of the tape carrier in which the requested tape cartridge is stored. Clearly, it could not then include the unique address of the cabinet in any request signal it transmits. The Examiner further states that communicating all the information recited in claim 28 on a common bus as suggested by Kott and Wakura would require the identity of the cabinet to be spelled out when all the cabinets share the same communication channel. Again, Appellants submit that one skilled in the art would not have considered this modification absent the use of impermissible hindsight. In fact, each of the tape carriers is connected to the host processor 52 over a common communication channel, and yet host computer 52 does not transmit a unique address associated with any one tape carrier.

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Accordingly, Appellants submit that Smith et al., Kott, and Wakura, whether considered separately or in combination, fail to teach or suggest each and every feature recited representative in independent claim 28.

3. Claims 30-33

Of this group of claims, only claim 30 is independent and claims 31-33 all depend from claim 30. Thus, independent claim 30 is representative of this claim group. Independent claim 30 was rejected as being obvious over Smith et al. in view of Kott and Wakura.

Independent claim 30 is directed to a file locating system comprising a combination of elements including at least a processor, a bus connected to the processor, a folder retainer connected to the processor by the bus, a plurality of file folders each including an addressable switch connected to the bus when the file folder is placed in the folder retainer, and a conductor provided in the folder retainer and coupled to the bus for establishing a common communication path along which control signals issued from the processor are transferred to the addressable devices of at least two of the file folders. The use of a conductor that establishes a common communication path shared by all the file folders that are located in a folder retainer is a feature that allows the files to be randomly placed in the folder retainer in a vertically stacked or horizontal abutting orientation, or hung in a file cabinet drawer in any random order.

Because the control signals transmitted to the tapes in the Smith et al. system are transmitted on dedicated lines separately connected to each tape, the Smith et al. system could not function properly if two tapes were placed in a single slot such that control signals would be provided to the two tapes over a common communication path. To the extent that Kott discloses the use of a common communication path for transmitting signals to the addressable devices on the docket card folders, Appellants do not believe that one skilled in the art would have considered modifying the Smith et al. system to include such a conductive rail since it would then be unable to receive or otherwise separate the article identification code that must be sent from the device on each article to the microcontroller (300) to maintain the information stored in the local memory device. Thus, such a modification would appear to destroy the primary function of the Smith et al. system. The teachings of Wakura do not suggest that any

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such modification would be possible or desirable. Accordingly, Appellants submit that independent claim 30, as well as claims 31-33, which depend therefrom, is allowable over the teachings of Smith et al., Kott, and Wakura whether considered separately or in combination.

4. Claims 34, 36, and 42

Of this group of claims, claims 34 and 36 are independent and claim 42 depends from claim 34. Appellants have selected independent claim 34 to be representative of this claim group since it is the broadest claim of the group. Independent claim 34 was rejected as being obvious over Smith et al. in view of Kott and Wakura.

Independent claim 34 is directed to an electronic file tracking system including a database and each file folder includes a conductor located on the file folder that is configured so as to electrically couple the addressable device on each file folder to the electrical contacts of the folder retainer when the file folder is positioned in each of several different positions. None of the cited references teaches or suggests this feature. Specifically, in Smith et al., the tape cartridges do not include conductors that are configured to couple the memory device to the contacts in the tape carrier when the tape is positioned in any one of several different positions. Clearly, the slots and tape cartridges are dimensioned such that the tape cartridges may not be positioned in the tape carrier in more than one position such that electrical contact could still be made. The Kott reference does not disclose that the electrical contacts on the docket card folders would continue to make contact if the position of the docket card folder were in any different position than that disclosed in the patent. Furthermore, Kott does not include the claimed database and there would have been no motivation for one skilled in the art to either modify Kott to include such a database or to modify the Smith et al. system based on Kott. As noted above, there would have been no reason why one skilled in the art would have modified the system of Smith et al. based on the teachings of Kott absent impermissible hindsight. The Wakura patent also fails to teach or suggest this feature. Accordingly, Appellants submit that representative independent claim 34 is allowable over the prior art of record.

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5. Claims 35 and 37

Of this group of claims, claim 35 is independent, and claim 37 depends from claim 36. Appellants have selected independent claim 35 to be representative of this claim group. Independent claim 35 was rejected as being obvious over Smith et al. in view of Kott and Wakura.

Independent claim 35 recites “for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is *positioned in each of several different orientations with respect to the electrical contacts.*” While the folders of Kott may be placed in different locations along the length of the electrical conductor in the folder retainer, a change in *orientation* of any of the folders *with respect to the electrical contacts* would prevent electrical coupling to the addressable device on that folder. None of the references teaches or suggests this feature and, therefore, Appellants submit that independent claim 35 is allowable over the teachings of Smith et al., Kott, and Wakura. As noted above, there would have been no reason why one skilled in the art would have modified the system of Smith et al. based on the teachings of Kott absent impermissible hindsight.

6. Claims 38-41

Of this group of claims, only claim 38 is independent and claims 39-41 all depend from claim 38. Thus, independent claim 38 is representative of this claim group. Independent claim 38 was rejected as being obvious over Smith et al. in view of Kott and also as being obvious over Smith et al. in view of Kott and Wakura.

Independent claim 38 is directed to an electronic file tracking system that includes the features presented in original independent claim 1 except for a bus and a database, and further recites that each file folder includes a conductor located on the file folder and is configured so as to electrically couple the addressable device on each file folder to the electrical contacts of the folder retainer when the folder retainer is positioned in any one of several different positions, wherein the conductor (which couples the addressable device to the processor) is configured to electrically couple the addressable device to the electrical contacts of the folder retainer *at a plurality of locations on the file folder.* None of the cited references teaches or

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suggests this feature. Specifically, in Smith et al., the tape cartridges do not include conductors that are configured to couple the memory device to the contacts in the tape carrier when the tape cartridge is positioned in one of several different positions. Clearly, the slots and tape cartridges are dimensioned such that the tape cartridges may not be positioned in the tape carrier in more than one position such that electrical contact could still be made. Further, the contacts of the tape cartridge are not located at a plurality of locations on the tape cartridge.

The Kott reference does not disclose that the electrical contacts on the docket card folders would continue to make contact if the position of the docket card folder were in any different position than that disclosed in the patent, nor that the electrical contacts are positioned a plurality of locations on the docket card.

In the remarks portion of the Office Action mailed June 22, 2000, the Examiner characterized Appellants' prior arguments as follows:

b. The applicant argues that the references do not show a [sic] retainer contacting the bus when the retainer is in any one of several different positions.

Regarding the above paragraph, the Examiner explains:

Regarding claim 38, the claims previously required coupling when the retainer is positioned in one of several different positions. As it has been previously discussed, the references to Kott and Gillotte both show this since the retainers of the references at least are coupled in one position.

In the claims however, in order to overcome the above interpretation, the applicant has amended to require coupling when the retainer is positioned [sic] any one of several positions. First it is believed that this language does not overcome the above interpretation, in that the references each show coupling in one orientation. Secondly, the references read on the claim language since there is coupling whether the retainer is the first retainer in the cabinet and also if the retainer is positioned in the back of the row. Therefore, there is coupling in any one of several positions.

Appellants submit that the Examiner has apparently misunderstood Appellants' prior arguments as well as the claims. Specifically, claim 38 recites "for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical

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contacts of said folder retainer at a plurality of locations *on said file folder*.” Regardless of whether a file folder in Kott is placed at the front or back of the file cabinet, the conductor on the file folder is not configured to electrically couple the addressable device carried on the file folder to the electrical contacts of the folder retainer “at a plurality of locations on said file folder,” as recited in claim 38. Instead, the conductors on the Kott file folder contact the electrical contacts of the retainer at only one location *on the file folder* despite the fact that the folder contacts the retainer contacts at several locations *along the container contacts*. Smith et al. does not teach or suggest this deficiency with respect to the teachings of Kott.

Accordingly, none of the references, whether considered separately or in combination, teaches or suggests the features recited in independent claim 38. Thus, independent claim 38 as well as claims 39-41, which depend therefrom, are allowable over the teachings of Smith et al. and Kott.

On page 11, paragraph (g) of the last Office Action, the Examiner contends that the three contacts on the bus provide a plurality of locations for the conductor (communication bus) to contact the folder. It is assumed that the Examiner is referring to Figs. 1 and 4 of Kott, which show three electrical contacts 115 on the file folder for connecting to the conductors of the three-wire bus extending through the docket card holder. The Examiner apparently considers the location of each of the three conductors to constitute a plurality of locations on the file folder for electrically coupling an addressable device to one of the electrical contacts of the folder retainer. It is noted, however, that independent claim 38 recites that the addressable device is coupled to the electrical contacts (plural) of the folder retainer at a plurality of locations on the file folder. Any one single location on which contacts 115 are provided on the file folder of Kott does not couple the addressable device to more than one electrical contact of the folder retainer. It should be noted that this claim corresponds to the various examples shown in Figs. 5 and 6 of the present application whereby the file folder may be rotated in orientation and still contact the electrical contacts of the folder retainer.

As stated above, there would have been no reason why one skilled in the art would have considered modifying the Smith et al. system based on Kott, and even if such motivation

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existed, the resultant system would not include all the features of claim 1. Thus, claims 38-41 are allowable over Smith et al. and Kott whether considered separately or in combination.

As noted above with respect to the rejection of claims 38-41 over Smith et al. and Kott, the combination of Smith et al. and Kott fails to teach or suggest the system defined in claim 38. Appellants submit that Wakura does not teach or suggest the deficiencies with respect to the Smith et al. and Kott references as applied to claim 38. Accordingly, Appellants submit that independent claim 38 as well as claims 39-41, are allowable over the prior art of record.

7. Claims 43-52

Of this group of claims, only claim 43 is independent and claims 44-52 all depend from claim 43. Thus, independent claim 43 is representative of this claim group. Independent claim 43 was rejected as being obvious over Smith et al. in view of Kott and Wakura.

Independent claim 43 is directed to a file locating system comprising at least a database for maintaining file location codes and unique file addresses for a plurality of files and additionally storing general file information for the plurality of files including at least one of a description of contents within the file, file classification, a keyword list associated with the file, a title of the file, an originator of the file, an accessibility permission list for the file, location descriptions associated with the file location code, and historical information for a plurality of files. None of the cited references teaches or suggests a file locating system that maintains such general file information in a database. Therefore, independent claim 43, as well as claims 44-52, which depend therefrom, is allowable over the teachings of Smith et al., Kott, and Wakura whether considered separately or in combination.

In the last Office Action on page 14, paragraph (q), the Examiner responded to the above arguments by pointing out that Smith et al. suggests a database or index storing information that can be searched using a library, and referred to column 1, lines 15-50 of Smith et al. This portion of Smith et al. merely states that requests for particular articles stored in large libraries are typically met by searching through an index or database and determining the location within the library of a requested article from the database or index. Smith et al. further states "The tapes are normally coded with unique alphanumeric identification numbers, and a tape request will typically be in the form of a request for a tape

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having a specified identification number” (See column 1, lines 39-42.) Thus, the database or index to which the Examiner refers apparently only includes the unique tape identification number and perhaps a location code. Smith et al. does not, however, recite that the database or index includes any of the specifically recited general file information that is recited in independent claim 43. Nor, for that matter, does Smith et al. even suggest that any additional information be maintained within the database or index. For this reason, a *prima facie* case of obviousness has clearly not been established with respect to independent claim 43 and the claims that depend therefrom.

Claim 46 depends from independent claim 43 and was rejected over Smith et al., Kott, and Wakura in view of Warren et al. Appellants submit that Warren et al. fails to teach or suggest the deficiencies with respect to Smith et al., Kott, and Wakura as applied to claim 43.

8. Claim 53

Claim 53 is the only claim of this group and is therefore representative of this claim group. Independent claim 53 was rejected as being obvious over Smith et al. in view of Kott and Wakura.

Independent claim 53 is directed to a file tracking system wherein the folder retainer is configured to support file folders that are stacked vertically upon one another such that each addressable device on each file folder in such a vertical stack is coupled to the electrical contacts of the folder retainer through the conductive contacts *provided on the file folders therebelow*. None of the references cited by the Examiner teaches or suggests a folder retainer in a file tracking system that is configured to allow the vertical stacking of file folders upon one another while still allowing these files to be tracked by the system. Therefore, independent claim 53 is allowable over the cited references.

Appellants note that the Examiner did not address the specific features of independent claim 53 in the last Office Action, nor did the Examiner respond to the arguments that Appellants submitted in the last Office Action. Appellants reserve their right to file a Reply Brief in response to any specific or new arguments made by the Examiner in an Examiner's Answer. In any event, Appellants submit that a *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been established with respect to independent claim 53 due to the Examiner's failure to address the

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specific features recited in claim 53. Accordingly, the rejection of claim 53 is deficient on its face and should be withdrawn.

9. Claims 54-62

Of this group of claims, claim 54 is independent and claims 55-62 all depend from claim 54. Independent claim 54 was rejected as being obvious over Smith et al. in view of Kott and Wakura.

Independent claim 54 is directed to a file tracking system comprising at least a plurality of folder retainers at least one of which is configured to support file folders an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders, and a plurality of file folders, each including an addressable device and adapted to be communicatively coupled to the processor when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers. None of the cited references teaches or suggests a file tracking system that allows for the use of different forms of folder retainers that support file folders in different orientations and also utilize file folders that are configured to be coupled to a processor when placed in any of these different folder retainers. Appellants submit that this is a distinct advantage insofar as most office environments utilize various forms of folder retainers. Therefore, independent claim 54 as well as claims 55-62, which depend therefrom, are patentable over the teachings of Smith et al., Kott, and Wakura whether considered separately or in combination.

Appellants note that the Examiner did not address the specific features of independent claim 54 in the last Office Action, nor did the Examiner respond to the arguments that Appellants submitted in the last Office Action. Appellants reserve their right to file a Reply Brief in response to any specific or new arguments made by the Examiner in an Examiner's Answer. In any event, Appellants submit that a *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been established with respect to independent claim 54 due to the Examiner's failure to address the specific features recited in claim 54. Accordingly, the rejection of claim 54 is deficient on its face and should be withdrawn.

Claim 58 depends from independent claim 54 and was rejected over Smith et al., Kott, and Wakura in view of the "Touch The Future" publication. Appellants submit that the

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“Touch The Future” publication fails to teach or suggest the deficiencies of the combined teachings of Smith et al., Kott, and Wakura as applied to claim 54.

Claim 61 depends from independent claim 54 and was rejected over Smith et al., Kott, and Wakura in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,636,950 issued to Caswell. Appellants submit that the Caswell patent fails to teach or suggest the deficiencies of the combined teachings of Smith et al., Kott, and Wakura as applied to claim 54.

10. Claim 63

Independent claim 63 was rejected as being obvious over Smith et al. in view of Kott. Independent claim 63 is directed to a file tracking system comprising at least a plurality of folder retainers connected to a processor by a bus, wherein at least one of the folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders. The claimed file tracking system further comprises a plurality of file folders each including an addressable device adapted to be electrically connected to the bus when the file folder is placed in any one of the folder retainers. Thus, the file folders are capable of being electrically connected to the bus when placed in a folder retainer regardless of whether the folder retainer supports the file folder in a first orientation or in a second orientation that is different from the first orientation.

In the system of Smith et al., all of the tapes are stored in the same types of slots, which support the tapes in the same orientations. If the tapes were, for example, placed upside down in the slot, it would not be electrically coupled to any other device. Thus, Smith et al. fails to teach or suggest the features of claim 63.

Kott only discloses one form of a card holder that supports the cards only in a single orientation. Accordingly, Kott fails to teach or suggest the same features of claim 63 that Smith et al. fails to teach. Thus, the combined teachings of Smith et al. and Kott fail to teach or suggest a system that includes each and every element of claim 63. Claim 63 is therefore allowable.

Appellants note that the Examiner did not address the specific features of independent claim 63 in the last Office Action, nor did the Examiner respond to the arguments that Appellants submitted in the last Office Action. Appellants reserve their right to file a Reply

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Brief in response to any specific or new arguments made by the Examiner in an Examiner's Answer. In any event, Appellants submit that a *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been established with respect to independent claim 63 due to the Examiner's failure to address the specific features recited in claim 63. Accordingly, the rejection of claim 63 is deficient on its face and should be withdrawn.

IX. Conclusion

For the reasons set forth above, and as is apparent from examining the invention defined by claims 1-63 when properly considering the cited references, these claims define patentable subject matter. Accordingly, reversal of the rejection of these claims under 35 U.S.C. §103 is appropriate and is respectfully solicited.

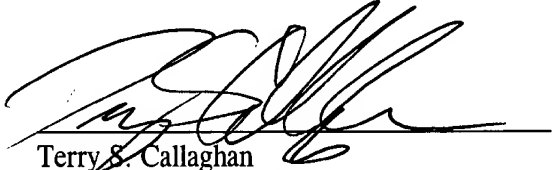
Respectfully submitted,

JOEL B. STANFIELD ET AL.

By: Price, Heneveld, Cooper,
DeWitt & Litton

Date

8-13-2002



Terry S. Callaghan
Registration No. 34 559
695 Kenmoor, S.E.
Post Office Box 2567
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501
(616) 949-9610

TSC/rsw

Appendix of Claims (37 CFR §1.192(c)(9))

1. A file tracking system comprising:
 - a database for maintaining file location and unique file addresses for a plurality of files;
 - a processor for interfacing with said database and issuing control signals;
 - a bus connected to said processor;
 - a folder retainer connected to said processor by said bus; and
 - a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be electrically connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in said folder retainer, each addressable device being responsive to a control signal including the unique address associated with the addressable device to transmit a signal back to said processor so that said processor may maintain the file location of each file in said database.
2. The file tracking system of claim 1, further including an indicator located on one of said file folders, wherein said addressable device includes an addressable switch and said indicator is activated when said addressable switch receives a control signal from said processor including the unique address corresponding to the file folder.
3. The file tracking system of claim 2, further including:
 - an input device for receiving commands and file identification information from an operator and providing the commands and file identification information to said processor,
 - wherein, when the operator inputs a command to search for a specific file, said processor accesses a unique address and file location stored in said database as corresponding

to input file identification information identifying the specific file to be searched for, displays the file location, and transmits a control signal including the unique address to the addressable switch of the file folder containing the specific file causing the addressable switch to activate the indicator.

4. The file tracking system of claim 2, wherein said addressable switch includes:

- a ROM having the unique file address stored therein;
- address comparing means for comparing an address included in a control signal received from said the processor with the unique address stored in said ROM; and
- state changing means for changing the state of said addressable switch when said address comparing means determines that the address included in the received control signal is the same as the unique address stored in said ROM.

5. The file tracking system of claim 4, wherein said addressable switch further includes a load transistor having a gate, a source, and a drain, said gate connected to said state changing means, wherein said state changing means changes the state of said addressable switch by turning on and off said load transistor.

6. The file tracking system of claim 5, wherein said indicator is an indicator light having a first terminal connected to said first conductor, and a second terminal connected to said source of said load transistor, wherein said drain of said load transistor is connected to said second conductor, and said indicator light is turned on when said load transistor is turned on by said state changing means.

7. The file tracking system of claim 1, wherein said processor includes:
- polling means for periodically polling said file folders to determine the presence and location of each file folder;
- means for updating said database when said polling means determines that a file location is different from the location previously stored or that a file that said database previously indicated as present is no longer present.
8. The file tracking system of claim 1, wherein said processor is a personal computer.
9. The file tracking system of claim 1, wherein said processor is any one of a plurality of computers connected to a local area network.
10. The file tracking system of claim 9, wherein said database is a distributed database accessible by any one of said plurality of computers.
11. The file tracking system of claim 1, wherein each of said file folders further include:
- a surface;
- a first conductor on said surface for providing control signals to said addressable device when the file folder is placed in said folder retainer; and
- a second conductor on said surface for providing a ground to said addressable device.
12. The file tracking system of claim 1, wherein said folder retainer includes:
- at least one surface;

a first conductive rail positioned on said surface for providing power and control signals to the addressable devices positioned on said plurality of file folders when said file folders are placed in said folder retainer; and

a second conductive rail positioned on said surface for providing a ground to the addressable devices when said plurality of file folders are placed in said folder retainer.

13. The file tracking system of claim 12, wherein at least one of said first and second conductive rails are integrated into a suspension rail of a file drawer upon which hanging file folders may be suspended.

14. The file tracking system of claim 12, wherein said folder retainer includes a plurality of shelves, and at least one of said first and second conductive rails are located on at least one of said shelves.

15. The file tracking system of claim 12, wherein said folder retainer is a file tray, wherein at least one of said first and second conductors are positioned in said file tray.

16. The file tracking system of claim 12, wherein said surface is an interior surface of a file drawer for use in a file cabinet, wherein at least one of said first and second conductive rails are positioned in said file drawer.

17. The file tracking system of claim 16, wherein at least one of said first and second conductive rails are positioned along a bottom of said file drawer.

18. The file tracking system of claim 16, wherein at least one of said first and second conductors are positioned along a side of said file drawer.

19. A file tracking system comprising:

a database for maintaining file location and unique file addresses for a plurality of files;

a processor for interfacing with said database and issuing control signals;

a bus connected to said processor;

an input device for receiving commands and file identification information from an operator and providing the commands and file identification information to said processor;

a plurality of folder retainers each connected to said bus via an addressable switch having a unique address, and each including an indicator for indicating the presence of a searched for file folder that is located therein; and

a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable switch adapted to be electrically connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in said folder retainer, and each including an indicator that is activated when said addressable switch receives a control signal from said processor including the unique address corresponding to the file folder,

wherein, when the operator inputs a command to search for a specific file, said processor

identifies a first unique address and file location stored in said database as corresponding to input file identification information identifying the specific file to be searched for,

displays the file location,

identifies a second unique address in said database for the addressable switch of the folder retainer in which the searched for file folder is located,
transmits a control signal that energizes a segment of said bus within the folder retainer corresponding to the searched for file,
transmits a control signal including the second unique address to the addressable switch of the folder retainer causing the indicator of the folder retainer to activate, and
transmits a control signal including the first unique address to the addressable switch of the file folder containing the specific file causing the addressable switch to activate the indicator located on the file folder.

20. A file tracking system comprising:

a database for maintaining file location and unique file folder address for a plurality of files, and a unique drawer address of each file drawer in which the files are located;

a processor for interfacing with said database and issuing control signals;

a bus connected to said processor;

a plurality of file cabinets, connected to said processor by said bus, each of said file cabinets including a plurality of file drawers, each file drawer having:

an outer face,

an addressable drawer indicator switch including a unique drawer address,

a drawer indicator light connected to said addressable drawer indicator switch and located on said outer face the file drawer,

a first conductive rail connected to said bus for receiving control signals from said processor, and

a second conductive rail for providing a ground,

wherein said addressable drawer indicator switch illuminates said drawer indicator light when said addressable drawer indicator switch receives a control signal from said processor including the unique drawer address corresponding to the file drawer; and

a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable folder indicator switch and a folder indicator light, wherein said addressable folder indicator switch is connected to said first and second conductive rails when the file folder is placed in one of said file drawers, and said folder indicator light is illuminated when said addressable folder indicator switch receives a control signal from said processor including the unique folder address corresponding to the file folder.

21. The file tracking system of claim 20, wherein said database additionally maintains a unique cabinet address, and said file cabinets each further include an addressable cabinet indicator switch connected to said bus and having a unique cabinet indicator address, and a cabinet indicator light connected to said addressable cabinet indicator switch, wherein said addressable cabinet indicator switch illuminates said cabinet indicator light when said addressable cabinet indicator switch receives a control signal from said processor including the unique cabinet indicator address corresponding to the file cabinet.

22. The file tracking system of claim 20, wherein said first conductive rail provides power to said addressable folder indicator switches and said addressable drawer indicator switches.

23. A method of locating a file comprising the steps of:

inputting information identifying the file to be located;

accessing a database to determine a present location of the file, a unique identification code associated with a receiver at the present location of the file, and a unique identification code associated with the file;

transmitting a first control signal to the receiver at the present location of the file, the first control signal including the unique identification code of the receiver, transmitting a second control signal to the file, the second control signal including the unique identification code of the file; and

activating an annunciator in response to receipt of one of the first and second control signals.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein the annunciator is located on the file.

25. The method of claim 23, wherein the annunciator is located on the receiver.

26. The method of claim 23, wherein the annunciator is an indicator light.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein said indicator light is located on the file and wherein the method further includes the step of illuminating a second indicator light on the receiver in response to receipt of the first control signal at the receiver.

28. A method of locating a file comprising the steps of:

inputting information identifying the file to be located;

accessing a database to determine a present location of the file, a unique identification code associated with a folder retainer in which the file is located, and a unique identification code associated with the file;

transmitting a control signal to the file, the control signal including the unique identification code of the file and the unique identification code of the folder retainer; and

illuminating an indicator light on the file in response to receipt of the control signal at the file.

29. The method of claim 28, further including the step of illuminating a second indicator light on the folder retainer in response to receipt of the control signal at the folder retainer.

30. A file locating system comprising:

a database for maintaining file location and unique file addresses for a plurality of files;

a processor for interfacing with said database and issuing control signals;

a bus connected to said processor;

a folder retainer, connected to said processor by said bus;

a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable switch connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in said folder retainer;

a file locating device adapted to aid in the location of a file folder in response to control signals issued by said controller; and

a conductor provided in said folder retainer and coupled to said bus, for establishing a common communication path along which said control signals issued from said processor are transferred to the addressable switches of at least two of said file folders.

31. The file locating system of claim 30, wherein said file locating device is an indicator light located on the file folder.

32. The file locating system of claim 30, further including:

input means for inputting information identifying the file folder to be located, wherein said processor accesses said database to determine a present location of the identified file folder, a unique identification code associated with a folder retainer in which the file folder is presently located, and a unique identification code associated with the file folder,

said processor transmits a control signal to the folder retainer in which the file folder is located, the control signal including the unique identification code of the file folder and the unique identification code of the folder retainer, and

said file locating device includes an annunciator activatable in response to receipt of the control signal, said annunciator being located on said folder retainer.

33. The file locating system of claim 32, wherein said annunciator is an indicator light.

✓ 34. (Three times amended) An electronic file tracking system comprising:

a database for maintaining file identity, file location, and unique file addresses for a plurality of files;

a processor for issuing control signals;

a folder retainer having electrical contacts communicatively coupled to said processor;

and

a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be electrically coupled to said processor when the file folder is placed in said folder retainer, and a conductor located on said file folder and configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in each of several different positions.

✓ 35. (Twice Amended) An electronic file tracking system comprising:

a processor for issuing control signals;

a folder retainer having electrical contacts communicatively coupled to said processor;

and

a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be electrically coupled to said processor when the file folder is placed in said folder retainer, and a conductor located on said file folder and configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in any one of several different positions, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts

of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in each of several different orientations with respect to the electrical contacts.

* 36. (Twice Amended) An electronic file tracking system comprising:

a processor for issuing control signals;

a folder retainer having electrical contacts communicatively coupled to said processor;

and

a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be electrically coupled to said processor when the file folder is placed in said folder retainer, and a conductor located on said file folder and configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in any one of several different positions, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in each of several different positions with respect to an adjacent file folder.

37. The electronic file tracking system of claim 36, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in any one of several different rotated positions with respect to an adjacent file folder.

38. (Twice Amended) An electronic file tracking system comprising:

a processor for issuing control signals;

a folder retainer having electrical contacts communicatively coupled to said processor;
and

a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device for electrically coupling to said processor when the file folder is placed in said folder retainer, and a conductor located on said file folder and configured so as to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer when said file folder is positioned in any one of several different positions, wherein, for at least one file folder, said conductor is configured to electrically couple said addressable device to the electrical contacts of said folder retainer at a plurality of locations on said file folder.

39. The electronic file tracking system of claim 38, wherein at least one of said plurality of locations is the side surface of said file folder.

40. The electronic file tracking system of claim 38, wherein at least one of said plurality of locations is the edge surface of said file folder.

41. The electronic file tracking system of claim 38, wherein one of said plurality of locations is the side surface and another one of said plurality of locations is the edge surface of said file folder.

42. The electronic file tracking system of claim 34, and further comprising a database for maintaining file location and unique file addresses for a plurality of files, wherein said processor interfaces with said database.

43. A file locating system comprising:

a database for maintaining file location code and unique file addresses for a plurality of files, said database further maintains general file information for a plurality of files including at least one of a description of contents within the file, file classification, a key word list associated with the file, a title of the file, an originator of the file, accessibility permission lists for the file, location descriptions associated with each file location code, and historical information for a plurality of files;

a processor for interfacing with said database and issuing control signals;

a bus connected to said processor;

a folder retainer, connected to said processor by said bus;

a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable switch connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in said folder retainer; and

a file locating device adapted to aid in the location of a file folder in response to control signals issued by said controller.

44. The file locating system of claim 43, wherein the general file information stored in said database includes a key word list, which lists certain key words that describe or may be found in a file.

45. The file locating system of claim 43, wherein the general file information stored in said database includes file classification, which indicates any classification groups with which a file folder is associated.

46. The file locating system of claim 43, wherein the general file information stored in said database includes accessibility permission lists, which are used to prevent certain individuals from accessing certain file folders.

47. The file tracking system of claim 43 and further including a plurality of folder retainers connected to said processor by said bus and remotely located relative to a memory device in which said database is stored, wherein the location descriptions stored in said database for each of said plurality of files identifies the folder retainer in which the corresponding file folder is located.

48. The file tracking system of claim 43, wherein said historical information includes at least one of file location history, file access history, and file retention history.

49. The file tracking system of claim 48, wherein the historical information stored in said database includes file location history, which indicates the locations and dates at which a file folder has been located over a period of time.

50. The file tracking system of claim 48, wherein the historical information stored in said database includes file access history, which indicates who checked out a file folder and when the file folder was checked in or out.

51. The file tracking system of claim 48, wherein the historical information stored in said database includes file retention history, which identifies the length of time since a file folder was last accessed in order to determine whether the file may be purged.

52. The file tracking system of claim 43, wherein said database further maintains a time stamp for a plurality of files indicating a time that a file was added, removed, and/or detected at a new location.

53. A file tracking system comprising:

a processor for issuing control signals;

a folder retainer having electrical contacts communicatively coupled to said processor;

and

a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device connected to conductive contacts provided on an exterior surface of the file folder and adapted to be electrically coupled to said contacts of said folder retainer,

wherein said folder retainer is configured to support file folders that are stacked vertically upon one another such that each addressable device on each file folder in a vertical stack supported by said folder retainer, is coupled to said electrical contacts of said folder retainer through the conductive contacts provided on file folders therebelow.

54. A file tracking system comprising:

a processor for issuing control signals;

a plurality of folder retainers communicatively coupled to said processor, wherein at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders; and

a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be communicatively coupled to said processor when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers.

55. The file tracking system of claim 54, wherein said at least one folder retainer is configured to support hanging file folders.

56. The file tracking system of claim 55, wherein said at least one folder retainer is a file cabinet drawer.

57. The file tracking system of claim 54, wherein said at least one folder retainer is configured to support file folders stacked vertically on top of one another.

58. The file tracking system of claim 57, wherein said at least one folder retainer is a file tray.

59. The file tracking system of claim 54, wherein said at least one folder retainer is configured to support file folders that horizontally abut one another.

60. The file tracking system of claim 59, wherein said at least one folder retainer is a shelf.

61. The file tracking system of claim 54, wherein at least one of said folder retainers is communicatively coupled to said processor by an RF link.
62. The file tracking system of claim 54, wherein at least one of said folder retainers is communicatively coupled to said processor by a bus.
63. A file tracking system comprising:
- a database for maintaining file identity, file location, and unique file addresses for a plurality of files;
 - a processor for interfacing with said database and issuing control signals;
 - a bus connected to said processor;
 - a plurality of folder retainers connected to said processor by said bus, wherein at least one of said folder retainers is configured to support file folders in an orientation different than that in which another folder retainer supports file folders; and
 - a plurality of file folders, each file folder including an addressable device adapted to be electrically connected to said bus when the file folder is placed in any one of said folder retainers.